



city of
greenville

News Release

GREENVILLE RESIDENT RECEIVES EXCEPTIONAL CITIZEN SERVICE AWARD

(Greenville SC) Fire Chief Steve Kovalcik, Deputy Chief Allen Quinn and Battalion Chief Alfred McElrath presented Greenville resident Charles Garretson with the Greenville City Fire Department's Exceptional Citizen Service Award at the July 28 City Council meeting. According to Chief Kovalcik, Garretson was recognized for his actions on May 7 following a gas tank explosion at The Vinings at Laurel Creek apartment complex.

A resident was working on his vehicle in an attached garage when sparks caused the gas tank to explode, which resulted in both the resident and the garage catching on fire. After hearing his neighbor's cries for help, Garretson ran out of his home and found the victim rolling on the ground on fire. Using a bottle of water, Garretson extinguished the fire and removed the smoldering clothing from the victim. As he was calling 911 for help, Garretson saw that the fire in the garage was intensifying. He retrieved the fire extinguisher from the complex office, and was able to keep the fire in check until firefighters arrived.

The victim had severe burns over 60% of his body. After preparing him for helicopter transport to the Augusta Burn Center and extinguishing the remaining fire in the garage, firefighters learned that his injuries would have been much worse, and possibly fatal, if not for Garretson's actions.

"As defined by Webster, a hero is 'a person of distinguished courage or ability – admired for his/her brave deeds and noble qualities; one who exhibits a selfless act,'" said Battalion Chief McElrath, who serves as the Fire Department's award committee chairman, during the presentation. "I think we all agree that Mr. Garretson exemplifies all of these qualities, as his selfless actions limited injuries and possibly saved the life of his neighbor, while ensuring that other families living in his building were not displaced due to fire."

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